Undecided voter emerges

WASHINGTON (AP) — For months, Richard J. Johnson, a lifetime Democrat who was the subject of a study into the voting habits of a typical "middle American," had said he was leaning this year to Republican Richard Nixon.

Now, just a day before the election, he says he has moved into the undecided camp. The reason: the Nixon administration's pre-election bid for peace in Vietnam.

"I really don't know how I'm going to vote," Johnson said in a television interview. "I'll make that decision in the voting booth at about 7:30 a.m. Tuesday morning."

Johnson, a $15,000-a-year credit manager with a subsidiary of the National Steel Corp. who lives in Rolling Meadow, Ill., was chosen last January by the National Public Affairs Center for Television (NPACT) for the study. In September, he spent four days with Sen. George McGovern's campaign.

Until the Nixon administration disclosed its Vietnam peace drive 10 days ago, Johnson said, "I was going to vote for President Nixon." Then, he began to lean toward McGovern, feeling that "if it could have been done now, it could have been done two years ago."

"As of right now, I really don't know what to tell you," he added.

Johnson, who has four children and whose wife works part-time, said, "I think there are lots of people like me. There are more people than a lot of people realize who are really undecided .... It's an election of two people that people aren't too interested about and they have to vote for one."

He said he thinks that, in that case, many might end up voting for the party they had supported in the past. In his case, he said, "If (Sen. Edward M.) Kennedy was running, I'd vote for him."

Though undecided on his own vote, Johnson isn't undecided on the outcome. Asked if he thinks McGovern might win despite deficits in the polls, he replied "my very best opinion is that he doesn't have a chance" unless there are even more undecided voters than anyone imagines.

But he said that won't affect his vote and that "I am going to decide on which is best for my own interests."